

# Cooking for Large Groups

## *Why should we be concerned about cooking for large groups?*

Every year, millions of people get sick from foodborne illnesses such as Salmonella, Norovirus, and E. Coli. Food safety can be challenging during the busy holiday season when you are more likely to be feeding large groups of people.

## *How can I prepare and serve food safely to large groups?*

- **Thaw Foods Safely** - Thaw frozen food in the refrigerator, under cold running water, or in the microwave. If you thaw food in the microwave, continue cooking immediately.
- **Keep Everything Clean** - Wash hands thoroughly and often. Clean preparation surfaces with hot, soapy water. Use separate utensils, cutting boards, and plates.
- **Cook and Cool Meats Thoroughly** - Use a meat thermometer to ensure poultry and any stuffed or ground meat is cooked to 165°F. Cook red meats and pork to at least 145°F. Cool large amounts of meat in shallow, uncovered pans at room temperature for the first hour, then refrigerate.
- **Serve Safely** - Always serve food with clean utensils. Never leave perishable food out of the refrigerator for more than 2 hours. Keep cold foods cold (keep on ice) and hot foods hot (use warming trays or crockpots) when serving.
- **Store Safely** - Refrigerate all leftovers to 41°F within 2 hours after serving. Eat leftovers within three days or freeze if you want to store longer.



*For more information:* [www.foodsafety.gov](http://www.foodsafety.gov)



12/17



Follow us on  
Facebook



**VDH** VIRGINIA  
DEPARTMENT  
OF HEALTH  
*Protecting You and Your Environment*

You can find this and other timely public health tips and events on the Thomas Jefferson Health District (TJHD) Facebook page. Check us out and "like us!"